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ABSTRACT

Between 1982 and 1985, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro held five summer institutes designed to improve French and Spanish foreign language instruction in elementary and secondary schools. The institutes were intended to: (1) revitalize teachers' language capabilities; (2) increase their cultural knowledge; (3) expose them to new developments in instruction and evaluation; (4) demonstrate the applicability of cultural and literary texts to classroom instruction; and (5) encourage stronger professional ties between school and university language teachers. The last two institutes were concurrent graduate-level French and Spanish programs. A total of 24 teachers participated. One coordinator/faculty member and a second faculty member staffed each of the programs, and 14 guest lecturers made presentations. Other staff fluent in the two languages were hired for support positions. The 4-week programs were followed by a 1-day workshop in the fall. Participant evaluations illustrate the complexity of designing and implementing such a program, but suggest that overall, the institutes substantially achieved their goals. (MSE)

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GRADUATE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE IN FRENCH/SPANISH

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AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory is a two-year project seeking to establish and test a model system for collecting and disseminating information on model programs at AASCU-member institutions--375 of the public four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The four objectives of the project are:

- To increase the information on model programs available to all institutions through the ERIC system
- To encourage the use of the ERIC system by AASCU institutions
- To improve AASCU's ability to know about, and share information on, activities at member institutions, and
- To test a model for collaboration with ERIC that other national organizations might adopt.

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I. Introduction

Between 1982 and 1985, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro held a series of five summer institutes designed to improve foreign language instruction in the schools by revitalizing the language capabilities and increasing the cultural knowledge of secondary and elementary teachers of French and Spanish. After a three-week pilot program in French in the summer of 1982, the four remaining institutes (Spanish in 1983, French in 1984, and concurrent French and Spanish programs in 1985) were funded by grants totaling $137,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The last of these awards, for $50,867, supported two Graduate Language Institutes, one in French (GLIF) and one in Spanish (GLIS) held concurrently on this campus from June 17 to July 17, 1985. The four-week summer program was followed by a one-day workshop held in the fall of 1985. The present report will describe the 1985 summer program in terms of planning, personnel and activities. It will also discuss follow-up activities.

II. Background

The institutes were designed for teachers, especially at the secondary level. Their primary goals were to help improve the quality of language teaching in the schools and to sustain the tradition of foreign language learning as part of the humanities. Specific objectives were to:

1 - revitalize the language capabilities of the participants
2 - increase their knowledge of literature and culture
3 - enrich their own teaching through exposure to new developments in the teaching of language and evaluation of language proficiency
4 - demonstrate, when appropriate, the applicability of cultural and literary texts to teaching in the schools
5 - encourage stronger ties between school and university language teachers in order to develop an increased sense of shared mission and foster professional dialogue on all levels.

We sought to implement these objectives through a four-week program of courses, tutorial sessions with monitors who have native fluency in French or Spanish, meals taken in common, evening lectures, films and optional special events on weekends. Participants were pledged to speak only French or Spanish during the entire four-week period of the institute.

III. Description

Planning and Publicity

During the 1984-85 academic year, the Coordinator of each institute, working with the Project Director and with staff assistance from the Department of Romance Languages and the support of the Office of Continuing Education, attended to numerous organizational details. Early efforts were aimed at reserving facilities

and, following notification of the grant in November, at publicizing the program. Letters describing the institutes were sent to all school superintendents in North Carolina and to the eight Regional Education Centers around the state. In addition, 3,000 flyers describing the institutes were attached to the February 22, 1985, issue of The Communicator, a newsletter published by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, and sent to language teachers across North Carolina. Other efforts at publicity included paid advertisements in The French Review Vol. 58, Nos. 3 and 4, February and March, 1985, and in the Journal Francias d'Amérique, and a massive mailing of brochures to Spanish teachers in fifteen eastern states.

Personnel

We received 131 inquiries from 32 states and 25 completed applications--14 to GLIF and 11 to GLIS. One applicant to GLIF was denied admission because of insufficient preparation in French; all the other applicants were accepted resulting in a total of 24 applicants in both institutes from nine states.

Faculty for GLIF included, as Coordinator, an Associate Professor of French, who taught French 580, Advanced Topics in French Literature: Comment enseigner la littérature?, and the Project Director, a Professor of French, who taught French 693, Special Problems in French Language: Cours supérieur de langue française. For GLIS, the faculty included, as Coordinator, an Associate Professor of Spanish, who taught Spanish 535, Twentieth Century Spanish Theater, and a Professor of Spanish, who taught Spanish 693, Special Problems in Spanish Language.

Fourteen guest lecturers addressed the participants. Of these, five spoke to the combined GLIF and GLIS groups in English, four spoke in French to the GLIF participants, three addressed the GLIS participants in English and the remaining two lectured to that group in Spanish.

There were two monitors in GLIF (two who had agreed to serve declined shortly before the program got under way) and four monitors in GLIS. All were native speakers of French or Spanish and each held at least the bachelor's degree. In order to maintain a totally French or Spanish atmosphere in the respective residence halls--Weil Hall for GLIF and Winfield Hall for GLIS--five telephone receptionists who are fluent in French were hired for GLIF and four who are fluent in Spanish were hired for GLIS.

A part-time secretary in the Department of Romance Languages was hired with grant funds for an extra two hours a day to assist with administrative, clerical and bookkeeping details. Grant support was also given to the Office of Continuing Education to cover the cost of support services. During the spring 1985 semester, graduate students assisted the Project Director and the Coordinators. In the fall, as preparation for the workshops were being made, graduate students provided further assistance. All were graduate assistants in the Department whose stipends were paid by the University.

Activities

Orientation

On Monday, June 17, prior to the arrival of the participants, a general meeting of all institute faculty and staff was held to outline the program's goals, clarify procedures and otherwise orient the people who would be working with the participants.

On that same day, a thorough orientation of the participants was conducted. After gathering in the lobby of the dormitory, the participants were introduced to the faculty and staff, and were issued their stipends and essential information on meals, lodging, parking, etc. They were conducted on tours to various parts of the campus relating to the institute and were generally given the time and information to complete the transition to campus life.

Schedule of Events

French Institute: The class on the teaching of literature began at 8:30 a.m. and, following a break from 10:00 to 10:15, the class on advanced French was taught until 11:45.

The lead monitor, in close cooperation with the live-in monitor, scheduled daily conversation sessions in the afternoon, regularly joined the participants for meals, as did the faculty, and was generally available for consultation at other times.

Evening lectures were held about twice a week and films were shown on Sunday evenings. A video cassette player was kept in Weil Hall and video cassettes on topics ranging from French commercials to an interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet taped when he was on this campus, were made available to the participants. In addition to the Independence Day picnic at Piney Lake, Saturday excursions were organized to Jugtown, N.C. (to see potters at work), and to the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh.

Spanish Institute: The class on advanced Spanish began at 8:30 a.m. and, following a break from 10:00 to 10:30, the class on theater met until noon.

The lead monitor supervised the scheduling of monitor sessions which were held every afternoon. The schedule permitted each participant to meet for one week with each of the monitors over the four weeks of the institute. In addition, the lead monitor arranged for special screenings of Spanish television programs via satellite at a local movie theater complex. A faculty member and at least two monitors regularly joined the participants for meals.

Evening lectures were scheduled about twice a week and Spanish videotapes, including lectures on pedagogical issues, were made available to participants for playback on the video cassette player which was kept in Winfield Hall. In addition to the Independence Day picnic at Piney Lake, Saturday excursions were organized to the North Carolina Museum of Art as well as the Chapel Hill campus.

Follow-up workshop

Follow-up workshops in the Graduate Language Institute in French (GLIF) and the Graduate Language Institute in Spanish (GLIS) were held concurrently on

the campus on November 8, 1985. The format for each workshop was similar, in that it included discussions with participants, a joint luncheon of both institutes, roundtable discussions with two major writers and public presentations by each writer. The latter were scheduled at different times to allow participants in each institute to attend.

French Institute: Nine out of thirteen participants returned to campus for the workshop. After coffee and a brief time to renew acquaintances, the program got under way at 10:30 a.m. with a presentation, followed by a discussion with French novelist and filmmaker Alain Robbe-Grillet. Monsieur Robbe-Grillet spoke on two topics covering his work: 1) his project with textbook writer Yvone Lenard to write a novel that would incorporate, in progressively difficult steps, the grammar and vocabulary of an intermediate French class and 2) the problems he has encountered with translations of his books, films and lectures. These topics related very nicely to the previous summer's courses--teaching language through literature, and the advanced French course which concentrated on the theory and practice of translations. The fact that Yvone Lenard was one of the speakers during the summer institute made Robbe-Grillet's observations all the more relevant. Discussion of his comments, as well as of his filmmaking, was extensive. The highlight, for many, was when Robbe-Grillet sat on the floor with a couple of participants to demonstrate the celebrated "matchstick" game from his first film, Last Year at Marienbad. Lunch with Robbe-Grillet, his actress-wife Catherine, and the Spanish institute was a convivial affair.

Following cocktails and dinner at the home of one of the participants, the group gathered once again for a showing and discussion of Robbe-Grillet's film L'Eden et Après (Eden and After). This event, which was translated, was scheduled in the evening in order to make it accessible to the Spanish participants and to the general public. At least 300 people attended. A very lively one-hour discussion followed the film.

Spanish Institute: The GLIS participants met on Friday morning, November 8, at 10:15. Eight of the eleven participants and two of the four monitors attended the follow-up workshop. Participants and monitors were asked to comment individually on how the Institute had helped them in their teaching. They felt that the experience had been positive. Some indicated that while they had not been doing so in the past, they were now reading Spanish literature. They had found the expressions and vocabulary learned in the Spanish language course to be very helpful. One said that she presently was teaching a third-year reading course in Spanish and that she was using El otro by Miguel de Unamuno, a play that had been read and analyzed in the Institute. As expected, the play was working well because its basic problem had to do with a personal identity crisis, a problem which young people often have to face. However, other participants decried the fact that they were not able to use their knowledge of literature in that they were teaching mainly first and second-year Spanish. When asked why this was so, some responded that they were just now trying to develop their enrollments in languages. One monitor said she was the new teacher in the department and that her senior colleagues were teaching the advanced courses.

It was suggested that they try to find ways of inspiring students to go on with their Spanish and that they speak personally to the best students in these classes, encouraging them to continue with their Spanish. In this way, they would be able to use their talents and knowledge more fully by creating for themselves advanced classes in literature.

The meeting ended at noon and the group went to the luncheon. The festive atmosphere of the luncheon contributed greatly to the occasion, and the participants and graduate students attending seemed to be very pleased to have had this opportunity.

The 3:00 lecture by Spanish novelist and essayist Carlos Rojas was well attended. His topic, "El Quijote y la realidad" was given in Spanish. After the lecture, some of the participants and the Coordinator met with Professor Rojas. He was able to elaborate on some of the more interesting points that he had made. After the evening meal, Carlos Rojas and others from GLIS attended the Robbe-Grillet film and discussion.

IV. Results and Recommendations

Participants were asked to complete evaluation questionnaires at the end of the four-week Institute and again during the follow-up workshop in November. My purpose here is to synthesize these responses for both the French and Spanish institutes.

French Institute: In their evaluations of the four-week summer program, participants were very pleased with the opportunities and resources for improving their linguistic ability. Rated particularly high in helping participants improve their French were conversations at meals, professors, monitors and other participants. Reaction was mixed, however, in evaluating the contribution of visiting speakers, probably because some addressed the French and Spanish institutes jointly in English.

Professors and monitors and, to a slightly lesser extent, participants received extremely high ratings as cultural resources. Again, perhaps reflecting the variety of topics, there were mixed reviews for the invited speakers as cultural and literary resources.

When asked what elements contributed most to the improvement of their teaching, highest marks went to other participants. This was an especially welcome sign since we had hoped to encourage the participants as a group to engage in their own development. The class on teaching language through literature was particularly appreciated as contributing to better teaching and improved relations between schools and universities. Here again, the weakest link in the chain was the invited speakers.

Participants gave high ratings to the library, location of events, the quality of meals, and the comfort of instructional sites. Seen as inadequate by some were the stipend, the materials provided and the pre-institute materials sent to participants. The high library rating is particularly gratifying since evaluations in an earlier institute showed that we had been less than successful in integrating library use into our program.

As for the follow-up workshop held in early November, all returning participants strongly agreed that the financial support for their return trip was adequate. There was also strong agreement that, as a result of the previous summer's institute, their linguistic ability had improved and that they were more enthusiastic and resourceful about their teaching. The workshop itself was thought to be well-organized, and the invited speaker (Alain Robbe-Grillet) was especially appreciated. The only disappointment was the indication by some that their school's administration was not fully supportive.

Generally speaking, then, our goals for the French Institute were achieved. Yet we allowed, for the first time, some speakers to address the participants in English and, obviously, this was a mistake. The workshop, with its renowned speaker addressing and actively interacting with the group in French, demonstrated that it is not the idea of visiting speakers that is flawed, but what they do when they get here. Any subsequent institutes should seek to remedy this and to improve the stipend and advance material sent to participants. The highest successes were the new course on teaching language through literature and the fact that participants took substantial responsibility for their own development.

Spanish Institute: The responses of participants to the summer program indicated that there was high, if not absolute adherence to the Spanish-only pledge. Sessions with monitors, time spent with other participants and meetings with invited speakers were all seen as contributing significantly to developing the participants' language skills. While reaction was slightly mixed, participants also gave high ratings to time spent in class, at mealtime and with professors as means of improving their abilities in Spanish.

Faculty and monitors played a major role in furthering the participants' knowledge of Hispanic culture according to their evaluations. Reactions to optional events were a bit more mixed both as to their value in improving linguistic skills and in expanding cultural awareness. Differences generally reflected the type of activity. Thus social gatherings were seen as better opportunities to improve one's Spanish than to expand one's knowledge of the culture. On the other hand, the visit to the North Carolina Museum of Art, conducted entirely in Spanish, was seen as having equal value as a linguistic and a cultural resource. The contribution of invited speakers to knowledge of the culture was somewhat less evident to participants, perhaps because some dealt primarily with pedagogical issues. Participants also indicated some problems with the scheduling of these events.

While participants generally praised the institute for its contributions to improving their knowledge of Spanish and of Hispanic culture, they were more reserved in their appraisal of its contributions to better teaching and school-university cooperation. Other participants, speakers and even video cassettes (some of which dealt directly with pedagogical issues) were seen as contributing most usefully in this area. Reading assignments and films, on the other hand, seemed to offer the least in improving language teaching. Clearly any subsequent institute which has among its goals the improvement of teaching and cooperative efforts among levels must make a more determined effort to organize its formal instruction to this end.

Generally speaking, participants in the Spanish institute were pleased with

the location and comfort of classrooms, with the class schedule, with organized field trips and with support services such as the library and audio-visual materials. They were often disappointed with the quality of housing and the adequacy of the stipend. Unlike the participants in French, fewer liked the meals (a difference that probably defies explanation). At a minimum, participants in any subsequent institute should be housed in air-conditioned dormitories and should receive increased financial support.

By contrast, financial support for participants who returned to the follow-up workshop in early November 1985 was deemed adequate--probably because it more closely matched actual costs. Participants gave high marks to the invited speaker for the workshop, Professor Carlos Rojas, a prize-winning Spanish novelist on the faculty at Emory University. After nearly a semester of teaching, participants agreed that their linguistic ability had improved as a result of the previous summer's institute and that they were both more enthusiastic and resourceful in their teaching. Judging from the response, much of their new knowledge and enthusiasm was conveyed to their colleagues in their home schools where administrators were reported to be generally supportive.

V. Conclusion

Evaluations of both the French and Spanish institutes demonstrate the complexity of such operations. The goals can be quite clear yet the program, with its full-immersion approach to language learning, is such an all-encompassing experience that few if any individual components contribute to these goals in a balanced way. Thus available software, such as video cassettes, may help the participants learn about ways to improve their teaching while professors, with their extensive and specialized knowledge of Hispanic culture, make a major contribution to increasing the participants' cultural awareness. I believe it is a fair assessment of each institute to say that its components, working in concert, substantially achieved the goals of the whole.